



Dangerous Ground

(KHNL)--More than 200 homes being built on Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe are sitting on dangerous ground.

Tests done by the contractor and the military show there is pesticide in the dirt, but the military officials say it's not enough to be concerned. A safety consultant who works for the contractor says something needs to be done to protect the families who are about to move in.

"What you'll end up with is contaminated grounds, lawns, shrubs and backlawns for the military families," said Walter Chun, who's worked in the environmental safety field for thirty seven years. He is a safety consultant to the contractor, Metcalf Construction.

Chun says his tests show some areas had high levels of chlordane. Some areas had levels twenty times the EPA's acceptable level. Chlordane was used as a pesticide, but was banned by the EPA in 1988 because of its health risks. Exposure to chlordane can cause liver damage, bronchitis, migraines, asthma, and cancer.

In a study it conducted, the Navy said the levels of contamination are okay, because the families won't be living there for more than six years.

"In December, they came back and told the contractor it's clean, don't worry about it," said Chun about the Navy's response.

"Just spread it out and plant your grass and shrubs on it."

The Navy awarded the contract to build the housing facility. In a statement, a spokesperson said the charges are "untrue" and the Navy would never knowingly expose military members, or their families, to any unsafe health risk.

Chun filed a complaint with the EPA, because the state Health Department says it doesn't have the power. So the contractor has no choice but to finish the project.

"We're going to walk away from this project leaving contaminated front yards for these children with this carcinogen and that's not something we can live with," said Chun.

The housing project is expected to be completed in August. It is being built for junior enlisted Marines.

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